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The Role of the

# CHRISTIAN WOMAN

in Scripture

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- Booklet II -

*- Privileges and responsibilities of a sister in Christ -*

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## **„A help meet for him” (Reading Genesis 2)**

I have been thinking of the role of women in Scripture. I say „in Scripture” for there I believe we have portrayed that which God would have us know. I believe that these „Holy Writings” were given us of God for our guidance, and our help, that we might know what He desires of us in this world. God had made us, and God had a purpose in so doing, and that purpose will be made known to us, not in seeking the opinions of men, or by observing the current views and tendencies of the age in which we live. We shall not discover God’s mind even by inquiry of the „religious” thought of our day. In these days when Christians are divided into differing „camps” and speaking with many voices, setting forth differing views, there can be little hope of obtaining any reliable guidance in that direction.

But open the Bible and there we have something on which we can rely. Here is the very word of God; this is something which emanates from Himself, which has stood the test of time, which is not outdated, which, although written hundreds of years ago, is fresh and vital, and as suited to the problems of our day and age, as much as it was in the days when it was first written. The more we meditate in these precious pages the more shall we absorb the true viewpoint, and outlook. Our minds will then be brought daily into an appreciation of God’s thoughts. Here is the great privilege that we have of having one Book above all others which is authoritative, and if we come to it with hearts and minds desirous of being taught of God then shall we be continually challenged by its teaching and will often have to correct our thoughts and say that our thoughts are not His thoughts. There is sadly a tendency in us all, stronger perhaps in some than in others, to admit the Bible to be the word of God, and yet to refuse to admit its full authority. What is written in one context is happily acknowledged, but other portions of that blessed Book are quietly and quickly passed over and forgotten. We do need to be sincerely ready at all

times to have our views and opinions challenged by the written word, so that we may see more clearly God's mind and purpose, and then have grace to accept what God has said.

So we will turn to Scripture to see what God intended for women in His order of things. We must, of course, commence by looking at the first woman. Often the first reference to any matter is of interest in Scripture, and I think it is so in this case. God's purpose is quite clear. Man was made first. The male was set in authority over what God had made. But he was alone, surrounded by God's works and the lower creatures, but having no one of his own kind. So we are not surprised when we read „It is not good that the man should be alone“. God saw the need that man would have for fellowship. God, Who has ever desired to show His love, knew also that man whom He had made, would also need some one upon whom he could bestow love and affection, so He decided to make him a suitable „help“. We know how this was done, a part of Adam was taken from him, and a woman was made by God from that rib, so that, she was truly a part of the man, and then God presented her to him.

Here then we see God's order; the man is given the dominant role and the woman is not given equal status, she is appointed to be a „help“ to the man. As a New Testament passage has it, „Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man“ (1 Cor. 11.9). This may not be popular in these days of supposed sex-equality, but for us who are Christians we have only two alternatives; either we accept the words of God and bow to His declared purpose, or we reject it and accept the views which are current today that try to make male and female equal. As we go on from this early Scripture and read on right through the book, we shall see that this is God's view. This first reference to the woman is the basis of all that is written afterwards, and the New Testament in this matter shows no change of view to what is expressed in the Old Testament.

What a precious role then God gave to the woman, to be a „help“ to the man. What a wealth of meaning there is in that

word - „a help“. What possibilities! Whatever the man now intended to do, no longer was he to do it alone, he had some one to help him. Some one to share his joys, his work, his problems, and afterwards his sorrows, some one to be at his side at all times to love him and encourage him and care for him. As a male myself, I see the wisdom of God in it, a man needs these things and God has provided the woman to meet that need.

But to return to the historical aspect. Eve was given to Adam, and one can imagine the sweetness and joy of that first union, in ideal and beautiful surroundings. What promise lay before them! To borrow an expression from the children's stories, we should expect that „they lived happily ever after“. But sadly the one who was given as a „help“ listened to a third person. She is found talking and discussing things, not with Adam, but with that „old serpent the devil“. And the result was that instead of helping, by this simple thing she hindered her husband, she helped her husband to sin. What incalculable unhappiness and sorrow has stemmed from that one action of a woman given as a „help“. How can we tell what will be the outcome of our wrong actions? Oh we can be sure when we deviate from what God intends for us we shall lose ourselves, as did Adam and Eve, and how our actions will affect others we cannot tell. So the first lesson that we learn about the role of the woman is that she is to be a „help“ to the man, and God willing we will pursue this subject another time.

## **„Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife“** (Reading - Genesis 15 & 16)

We were looking last week at the words of Scripture, which tell us how God created both a man and a woman and we saw too that the woman was made for the man and that God's intention in making a wife for Adam was that he should have a helper. We reminded ourselves that if we would please our

Lord we shall be guided by what we read in His own precious Book. We shall take what we read there as authoritative. We shall not allow our thoughts and ways to be moulded on the views of the generation in which we live, but increasingly as we are made aware of God's mind we shall seek grace to see things as God sees them, and order our lives accordingly.

Our natural tendency is always to do what we think is right and proper and what pleases us. But the child of God who has passed the „baby” stage, whose spiritual perception is growing, will begin to see that the pathway set before him or her, is one of pleasing God, and pleasing Him at the cost of doing things which go, at times, against our own feelings. The more we love our Lord and His words the more shall we be brought into harmony with His mind, so that as we grow up into Him, we shall find increasingly that our thoughts are in tune with His thoughts and we shall rejoice in that which once we felt to be irksome.

We noted that the New Testament and the Old Testament agree as to the position of the woman. The advent of the Gospel has not changed or altered the status of man and woman. Sarah is one who is brought before us an example for godly women, not that she was perfect but her general attitude is to be imitated by spiritual Christian women.

We also have recorded of Sarah that she told Abraham to marry her maid, which he did. „He hearkened to the voice of Sarai“. It was not God's will; it only brought trouble to Sarah herself. We saw what resulted when Eve took the lead, taking the fruit and giving it to her husband. We remember the words „Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife“. There is a parallel. These surely are more than hints to the devoted woman who would please the Lord. Sarah decided what ought to be done; the only thing possible to her mind at the time. But what she had to learn (as we do too) is that what appeals to us is not necessarily God's will. God had a purpose for Sarah which she found hard to believe. What she planned

brought her sorrow of heart, but when God's way was revealed to her then she was made to laugh, and her son was named Isaac (laughter).

The path of doing what we think right often ends in sorrow, it stunts our spiritual growth too. How can the Lord use us if we are so set in our own ideas? Enoch had the testimony that he pleased God, this was his way of life. The Lord Jesus Himself said „I do always those things which please Him“. This is the attitude of life for both the man and the woman who trust in God. Each has a distinct sphere, but a very blessed related sphere. The man is not without the woman in Christ. A convent for Christian women and a monastery for Christian men is NOT God's intention, some are called to live the single life in order to undertake special service which this requires. But most men **need** a God-given helper. They are incomplete otherwise, and what a true Christian woman can do for her husband to help him in his service for God is enormous. She does not lead, nor take the responsibility from his hands, if she loves her Lord and her husband. But her influence, her love, her help, her understanding, even her very presence can be the very making of the man. God would never have given man a „help“ if he did not **need** her. The role of the Christian woman is not that of the Mohammedan woman for instance, neither is it the twentieth century „western pattern“.

„The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised“. But the woman who wants to shed her womanhood and take over the tasks which God has appointed for the male is not pleasing to God, and is robbing herself of the joy of fulfilling the purpose which God intends for her.

Some dear believers have the habit of looking at things from the „effect“ backwards to the „cause“. What was done resulted in blessing - therefore the blessing proves that what was done was right. But such reasoning is quite wrong. I heard a brother say he believed in the public ministry of sisters, and he instanced a case where a man was booked to speak and did not

arrive, and a sister took his place, and many were blessed by her address. How often God overrules our wrong actions! Moses was told to speak to the rock, but he struck it; the precious water flowed forth for the thirsty thousands, the blessing came. But Moses lost heavily for not doing what he was told. We too may have „success“ but we can be sure that we shall lose ultimately if we walk in a path which is contrary to the Lord's revealed will. If only the gentle tenderness and love which is characteristic of the woman were more evident in us all in our relationship with our loving Lord!

### **„I suffer not a woman to teach ...“** (Reading - 1 Timothy 2 & Titus 2)

As we follow our enquiry into the role of the woman as brought before us by God in the Scriptures we must be impressed with the fact that there is very little said about women, the Bible mainly deals with men. There were no women appointed to do any service as priests in the Old Testament, there were no queens, except Athaliah a wicked woman who usurped the throne. It is remarkable that upon the page of Scripture we are so forcibly reminded that where women are found out of their God-given sphere they are not god women, but the reverse. Jezebel was not a queen in her own right, but she wielded great power; a woman steeped in wickedness, and who came to a tragic end, and we read „There was none like unto Ahab which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, **whom Jezebel his wife incited**“. Her name must also remind us of Rev. 2.20. The New Testament prohibition „I suffer not a woman to teach“ is perfectly clear and the spiritual believer will acknowledge this as the commandment of the Lord, and the only place where we read of a woman teaching the servants of the Lord is in this passage of Revelation. A woman out of her sphere; and her



teaching? immorality and the eating of things sacrificed to idols! Scripture is the **only** guide which we as Christians have; it is God's word to us, that whereby the Holy Spirit speaks to us.

Should the godly sister in our dispensation of grace seek to copy the holy women of old? Or should she seek to take the province of ruling, leading and teaching? That in Scripture is the role of evil women! Should not such things impress the heart that really loves and desires to please the Lord?

We noticed last week the power of the woman for good. In Jezebel's case we see the opposite. Ahab had a wife who incited, stirred him up to wickedness. Let us never underrate the power of the woman. As a wife, although the „weaker vessel“ she has the opportunity of influencing and helping her husband for good and for God, but sadly as in this case and in many others since, the wife has been a „help“ to promote and encourage more wickedness in her husband.

The privileges and responsibilities of the Christian woman are certainly very great, and the effect very far reaching. We cannot but be impressed by the history of the kings in the Old Testament. The name is given of the king and then the name of his mother. Why? Because the mother trains the child, and the child becomes the king, so in effect the mother controls the destinies of the nation through its ruler, under God. Let no Christian woman, single or married, think that she has nothing to do for God, or that the role she has been given by God is small and of no importance; that she must try to take over other responsibilities which God has given to the male. The New Testament makes quite clear that the godly older sister **has a teaching ministry**. She is to be „a teacher of good things“. She is to „teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed“. The woman is to learn in silence as far as church life is concerned. But in her own sphere

she has the God-given privilege of seeking to mould the lives of her younger sisters so that they are more suited for their task of helping their husbands and guiding their children. Here is a teaching ministry for sisters, the results of which cannot be estimated. If the young wife is influenced for good by her elder and more experienced sister what blessing will accrue to the husband who will be helped to serve the Lord more acceptably and joyfully, and so the older sister who has taught and the younger sister who learned and put into practice, are both sharers in what the man has been enabled to do.

Again, in the sphere of the children, who can measure the results of godly influence and instruction of the believing woman? Timothy's mother and grandmother are instanced. We read he knew the Scriptures from a child, and so he became by God's grace a useful and faithful servant of God who in turn influenced many. But it was on the background of the early teaching received. So the woman had in this case the privilege of being an instrument of blessing to many because she faithfully taught her child the Scriptures. The woman has a vital, necessary and responsible role to perform and if she siezes the opportunities of service which God has given her she will find she is fully occupied and will have no time to spend in public speaking or open-air preaching and the like, which God has committed to the male. God has set us in the „body” with our proper functions to perform. The eye is for seeing, and the ear for hearing. The confusion comes in the spiritual „body” when the ear wants to do the work of the eye, and the foot the work of the hand.

Let Scripture, which is of God, be our guide, and not our own inclinations. God in His wisdom has given the more public responsibilities to the man and the sister who has grown in grace and has a measure of spirituality will gladly acknowledge this and will busy herself in serving the Lord in her own God-appointed sphere which is in no sense less important than that for the man.

No women were appointed as priests, but the women did the work of making the tabernacle. The curtains, the embroidery, the garments of glory and beauty for Aaron and his sons, were made by them. Their work was vital and absolutely necessary. God's dwelling place was not complete without the patient labours of these wise-hearted women. When one looked at the tabernacle from the outside all that was seen was the work of the women, their lovely creative work was evident for all to see. But just imagine what would have happened if any woman had donned those beautiful garments and approached the altar!

No, the woman has a vital role but not a public one. And we can be sure that if the women fail in their duty then the results will soon be evident. She does not teach in the gatherings of God's people, she is to be silent (1 Tim. 2.12; 1 Cor. 14.34). She is to learn in silence, with all subjection (1 Tim. 2.11) and it is the men (males) who are to pray everywhere (1 Tim. 2.8). The New Testament offices in the church are restricted entirely to males; the apostles were men, those who preached the gospel were men, and whether this agrees with modern thought or our own preferences, matters little. God has given us His word as our guide. And the challenge which is continually presented to us is, shall we acknowledge that „**ALL** Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine“ or is it that only parts of that precious Book are for our guidance today?

### **„Those women who laboured with me in the gospel“ (Reading - Proverbs 31)**

We saw last week from the Scriptures, which we believe to be inspired of God, that women who have been brought to know the Lord as their Saviour, have a very useful and definite sphere of service. Those who are older in the faith are to teach their younger sisters, and their influence, as with the children, can

be, and should be, a blessing which has far-reaching effects. There are other aspects of the privileges of Christian sisters in the New Testament which we must not overlook.

From the beginning of time, and still today, the woman has had the responsibility of managing and running the home. This last chapter of Proverbs describes the preciousness of the wife who excels in this. Her work has to do with caring for the needs of the family, their clothing, their food and so on. So we are not surprised as we read in the New Testament that the woman of those far off days who were devoted to the Lord sought to serve Him along these lines.

It is good to read of the love and service of the women when the Lord was here on earth. It is not given much prominence in the record, as we would expect, but it **is** there for all to read. Luke 10.38 tells us of Martha who „received Him into her house“, and in that same house „there they made Him a supper and Martha served“ (John 12.2). Luke 8.2,3 shows us the women who had been blessed of the Lord and show how they showed their affection for Him. They were with Him at times, they „ministered to Him of their substance“. They did not engage in the preaching, but what they did in their rightful sphere enabled the gospel to be preached. And such service is not forgotten of God. The devotion of the women is very precious to the Lord. We remember how He defended the woman who anointed His head, and that act of devotion to Him has been recorded that the whole world may know what she did.

We remember too, Dorcas, who used her skill with her needle to serve the Lord, and so necessary were her labours that she was raised from the dead to continue them! Priscilla and Aquilla (I wonder why Priscilla is mentioned first) are brought before us as those who laboured together, called „my helpers“ by Paul. You will remember how „they“ took Apollos to them, and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. Phebe (of Conchrea) a servant (deaconess) of the church, who was a

succourer of many and of Paul too was commended to the Roman believers, and perhaps it was she who carried Paul's letter to them. What of „Mary, who bestowed much labour on us“? What of „Tryphena and Tryphosa who labour in the Lord“? What of „those women who laboured with me in the gospel“ at Philippi, of whom Paul speaks? Though there is not a word of their preaching the gospel or even of speaking in the church, yet Paul considers that what they did, was „labour with“ him and „labour in the Lord“.

The service which these portions of Scripture indicate which was so precious and so necessary, is the extension of what is the normal service of the woman in the home. Beyond caring for her own, she can care for the servants of the Lord. She can invite into her home, and not only for food and comfort. Priscilla with her husband, could help, in their home, a brother who was „mighty in the Scriptures“. We can imagine how Paul appreciated the love and attention of Mary (of whom we know nothing more) for he was not a married man. Though he denied himself the joy of a wife, he still needed the ministry of sisters for the things of this life, and here in this sphere the woman excels.

There are some who seek to build on the words „Go tell My brethren“. The dear sisters who were early at the grave on the resurrection morning had the privilege of seeing their Lord before the menfolk, and He sent them with a message to His brethren, and that is all. They did not tell the world, they only told His brethren. How delightful it is, though, to see how their devotion to the Lord was rewarded by seeing Him first. What joy was theirs to see and talk with Him Whom they thought was dead!

Acts 21. 9 mentions „four daughters which did prophesy“ and 1 Cor.11.5 refers to a woman „prophesying“. We have no record in Scripture whether this was in private or public, though we remember the words „It is a shame for a woman to speak in the church“. But since this gift of prophecy does not exist today and

would be quite out of place in this time in which we live, we can leave this matter until the day when „on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit and they shall prophesy“.

Another aspect of the woman also found in 1 Cor.11 is that she is „the glory of the man“, and another „glory“ mentioned in this same chapter is her long hair. Did God’s Spirit make a mistake when He guided Paul to pen such words? One would feel that many Christian women think so, for they are only too ready to follow the fashion of our day and have their long attractive hair shortened. However the sister who loves her Lord will no doubt agree that her long hair, is a **glory**. And in passing, we will notice that that lovely, simply dressed hair (1 Tim.2.9) is to be covered when at prayer (1 Cor.11.5,6). It is not that on entering what is often regarded as a „house of God“ a man removes his hat and a woman remains covered, but it is a matter of **prayer**. Everyone would, I think, be amazed to see a man praying with his head covered, but many are not at all surprised to see a sister praying uncovered. This in some cases is due to lack of teaching on the subject, but in others, women reject as „bondage“ the plain words of Scripture. How sad it is when the words of our God find no response in our hearts because we want „freedom“ to do what we think is best.

May we both, brethren and sisters, be those who are willing, out of devotion to Him Whom we love, to let His word have its rightful place in our lives, so that all that He has appointed for us we may happily accept and serve Him in the way which pleases Him. Mary sat at His feet and heard His words, and she chose a good part. May we too so sit, and when it is time to rise may we be, not forgetful hearers, but doers of what we have heard from His lips. This is not „bondage“ but liberty, to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

*S.C. Bown*

# The Ministry of Sisters,

## Marked Out by the Lord's Own Arrangements on The Day of Resurrection.

**A**LL believers are *one* in CHRIST, and should seek to be of one heart and soul and mind manifestly (Acts 4. 32, 1 Cor: 1. 10). But all believers have not the same functions, any more than all members of the body (Rom. 12. 4, 1 Cor. 12). Jealousy often rises through failure to recognize this. The right principle is set forth in 1 Cor: 12. 26 "OR IF ONE MEMBER BE HONOURED, ALL THE MEMBERS REJOICE WITH IT." Such fellowship is necessary, and beautiful, and GOD-glorifying. The world is full of a false idea of "equality," full of rivalry, full of an attempt to ignore the distinctions which GOD has made. One cannot exactly "compare" the work of the eye and the ear, but *both* are needful: and the *hidden members* are sometimes the most powerful. Without the lungs, how could we continue? The exaltation of that which is "*seen*" beyond that which is unseen, is idolatry.

When the LORD was pleased to choose apostles, He chose *men*. All His plans are perfect: He is not limited: He *could* do other things. The fact that He has *not* done so makes evident His will. There were parallels in His arrangements for Israel, both as to Aaron's line and David's. *Athaliah* denied GOD'S appointment. "Oversight" in the early assemblies is likewise marked out, though the labours of older sisters, aged widows, and *Scriptural* deaconesses must be noticed with joyous interest. Yet assembly-oversight was *not* entrusted to such. "As for GOD, His Way is perfect," and we would delight therein. Who can measure the power of a child of GOD in *the appointed path*? If we try to vary His Will, we shall lose reward for obedience, and *also* receive loss for *disobedience*. Two sins are usually linked. It is worthy of notice that on the first day of the week when our beloved LORD was raised, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16. 9). And **EVERY** gospel emphasizes believing *women* in *similar* peculiar prominence. What a definite privilege is suggested, and thereby we find a holy witness against the sin of any brethren and sisters in the LORD, who rise late on the LORD'S Day morning.\*

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\* The blessing on the Day of Pentecost was likewise early in the morning, for after prayer and empowering and gathering of multitudes, it was only nine o'clock.

And both the LORD and His angels spoke *encouragingly* to the women, that they might rejoice, and *become an encouragement in their turn* to others. How definitely is His meeting of such contrasted with Satan's work in Eden. The tempter said in the garden "Ye shall not surely *die*," *but* in another garden He Who was supposed to be the gardener, said "My FATHER and your FATHER":—a message of life because of His *death*: and a striking witness in view of John 8. 44 and the serpent's seed of Gen: 3. 15. Earnestly observe other words also of John 20. 17 "Go to My brethren, and say unto them," and those of Matt: 28. 7 "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead," and of Matt: 28. 10 "Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me." How real is the stress on the privilege of doing *something for Him*. How real is the further contrast with Genesis 3. The woman "*saw*" the tree, and gave to her husband: Satan's message was borne: but here the LORD'S message is delivered, and it concerns the "*seeing*" of Himself (a twofold emphasis here, verse 7, also note Mark 16. 7, John 20. 18). Nor can we overlook another contrast "As He said unto you" (Mark 16. 7), spiritually opposed to "Yea, hath GOD said?"

Believing women are to be marked by definite *devotion* to the LORD. It is worthy of notice that they were *together*. Though His death and resurrection bring brethren and sisters to a *oneness* in Himself, yet sisters are together, and *a brethren's meeting is appointed*: instead of envying as to this, they are the messengers for the arrangement of such a gathering. If a sister ignores the principle of being with sisters she often loses, though in the general gatherings of the saints all are assembled. But fleshly forwardness and a preference for being with those of another sex are out of place. Discretion is still much needed in a house of GOD. Let *godly* sisters be together in love unto the LORD, not to criticize some one else's home or neat dress. The so-called "small" talk of those who bear the Name of CHRIST is large in its evil: the LORD has told believing sisters of WHAT and of WHOM they are to speak! Let them be carefully earnest to illustrate *these* words, and provide a holy opposition to 1 Tim: 5. 13.

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\* Throughout we find an emphasis on His words. In like manner, sisters are told *what* to do. They are not led to do what they think best. And brethren also are to receive their instruction.



Further, though the LORD definitely gave His encouragement to brethren, through sisters, He did *not* say to *them*, "It is for you to go into all the world and preach the gospel." He did not say to such "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."† They had *their* privilege, and with love's promptness they sought to fulfil it, and the HOLY SPIRIT has recorded this holy enthusiasm in *every* gospel.

If then we find the LORD'S stress on the devotion, and fellowship of sisters, with "one another," and the way in which "they remembered His words" (Luke 24. 8) our hearts ask, "Are there not some of like heart to-day?" Are there not those sisters who will stimulate other children of GOD by their living, loving, and loyal faith in Him? Lois and Eunice did not take charge of GOD'S work at Ephesus, but where would Timothy's work have been if theirs had not been *first*? GOD uses means, background means, "means," that fill years of strain, of consistency, and of love to Him.

Do your actions say, "I want publicity": "I desire immediate results," or is it your desire simply to be in the LORD'S will, without jealousy, without fretfulness, without impatience, willing in the enabling of the HOLY SPIRIT, to do anything for the LORD? Believing sisters may thus become a *great help*, and background, as to assembly unity, and gospel witness. But are they always so, or is there sometimes friction coupled with worldliness? Oh that this may not be! GOD is able to save from our besetting sins, whether we be brethren or sisters, that we may **LIVE FOR CHRIST!**

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† Accordingly in 1 Cor: 15 where "witnesses" of the resurrection are brought before us (*cf.* Acts 10. 40-42), His appearance to sisters is designedly and entirely left out. Is this an accident?

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LIKEWISE, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

1 Peter 3.1-4

## **Answers to Questions on the Ministry of Christian Women.\***

**T**HE sad tendency to limit ministry largely to “preaching” has often hindered God’s dear people, and many have failed to see other precious open doors of privilege and responsibility for sisters in Christ—the stress in Scripture on “helping” (Gen. 2. 20), rather than leadership, has often been overlooked. God’s emphasis on male priests and Levites, and His appointment of kings (Athaliah is a solemn contrast) must not be relegated to the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit’s words in 1 Corinthians 14. 34 (in the light of 9. 8 they can hardly be explained otherwise) indicate that the principles relate to the present dispensation also. And accordingly all the apostles were males, and so is it as to the writers of the New Testament (the words of believing women are introduced, but a believing man issued them). In the assemblies we find elders appointed: there is no suggestion of a parallel for sisters (1 Tim. 5. 2 cannot be so taken). But among the assistants we do find a “deaconess” (Rom. 16. 1), as well as “deacons.” This accords with the Holy Spirit’s stress on “helping.” The wondrous opportunities in the home, where the law of the mother is so definitely before us in Proverbs, and in other spheres of service where the Lord commended faith, and love, and devotion, must never be overlooked. Much more could be said on this. If the members of our body should seek to be some other members, they would dishonour themselves and hinder all. There is no intrinsic glory in prominence. There is no disgrace in the background. The only honour is GOD’S WILL, and our hearts would seek this. True love never lacks an open door, and never opens one against God’s words.

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\* Other leaflets on this, and related important subjects, gladly sent to any who are concerned to know and do God’s will alone. The Lord may enable something longer to His glory, to encourage His handmaidens to take their appointed privileges.

We have been asked, "Does the Scripture forbidding a woman to teach a man mean that a sister in the Lord is not to teach her unsaved husband how the Lord accepts him, or, after he has received the Lord Jesus, is she to stop instructing him (I refer to a sick husband)?"—similar questions as to hospital visiting and letters are commended to our prayerful thought.

We are thankful for all reverent concern that leads to such exercise of soul, and are convinced there will be blessing if children of God have the attitude of willingness for His Will, instead of deciding by feelings. It *may* be that His Will and the feelings will sometimes bring the same answer, but the spiritual experience gained is vastly different, and, if His Will is the cause of our action, there will be preservation from *trusting* to feelings when on another occasion they may lead against the Word of the Lord. We can conceive of many answering the question we are asked, "Of course not," but not a few would answer in the same way against the testimony of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 14. 34. Verse 37 seems to warn us beforehand against the tendency to decide by emotions and apparent blessing.

This chapter and 1 Timothy 2 seem the most definite declarations of God upon the subject. Though the former does refer to God's principles generally, it specifically appoints silence for sisters in the meetings of the "assembly," and is not referring to other occasions as to the home. Hence we would now ponder the other passage, "Let a woman learn in silence, in all subjection: but I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to be independent of (a) man, but to be in silence" (verse 12).<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself. Plainly the Lord Jesus sent women with a deeply important message on the resurrection day. Hence this cannot mean absolute "silence" everywhere and as to everything. But we

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<sup>1</sup> Somewhat more literally than A.V. we might also render "nor to have authority over man": the word occurs nowhere else in N.T. It illustrates the fact that INITIATIVE was given to man, and that even among children of God sisters should not act "for themselves." The word "self" is embedded in the verb used.

feel at once that any human restriction of a passage may be unsafe, varying according to personal wishes. Therefore we ask, "Does not God Himself indicate where He appoints silence?" Evidently it is not in the home, where the mother's gracious voice is to be much heard, as Proverbs shows, and as Eunice and Lois make evident.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, we call to mind that which seems to be the approval of the Holy Spirit regarding the co-operation of Aquila and Priscilla, in explaining the way of God more accurately (Acts 18. 26).

The solution seems to be found in 1 Timothy 2 itself, as we read it prayerfully and carefully. "Everywhere" in verse 8 is literally, "in every place." When Israelites in a locality were not numerous enough for a synagogue there was a place of prayer, and have we not here the Holy Spirit's use of similar language, which the usual translation quite obscures? This explains the difference between chapters 2 and 3. In the latter we have an ASSEMBLY, and much fuller arrangement. Here, in chapter 2, then, we see God's plan when "first of all" His work begins in any place, with the expectation of spiritual growth that there may finally be an assembly. 1 Corinthians 1. 2 is probably similar.

Hence in preparatory meetings, which sometimes tend to be *too* "informal," with a freedom against reverence, the Holy Spirit appointed that BRETHREN should pray ("males," verse 8), and that SISTERS should help equally by a godly contrast with the world's fashions (9). O that this were realized to-day! 1 Corinthians 11. 10 seems to suggest in its deeply impressive context, that evil angels have an

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<sup>2</sup> In this connexion it is important to see that "guide the house" (1 Tim. 5. 14), with regard to the children just mentioned, is the verb derived from "master of the house," and emphasizes strong authority. Hence there is a real home rule, which is no usurpation, but in harmony with the husband (when believers, "heirs-together" 1 Pet. 3. 7). No difference of judgment in a Christian home should assert itself before the children. There should be a definite evidence of the unity God has asserted (Eph. 5. 31). Any differences between believing parents should be prayed over TOGETHER. The importance of marriage in the Lord (1 Cor. 7. 39), of like minded children of God, is evident. When one is saved after marriage, and the other remains unsaved, 1 Peter 3. 1-4 gives much help.

“advantage” when Christian women refuse their “honour” of pleasing God by wearing a covering.<sup>3</sup> It is in this connexion that the Holy Spirit appoints silence, and forbids teaching, and shows how the denial of God's sovereignty and of the earlier Scriptures (1 Tim. 2. 13, 14) would lead to the weakening of this appointed division between the activities of brethren and sisters, (though they are equally one in Christ as to acceptance). Hence a godly speaking of the Lord Jesus to a sick husband, or to other sick ones, or other individuals, is, by no means, set aside. Any spirit of exaltation is forbidden (to all), and a wife would be peculiarly careful not to take the *manner* of a teacher. We may have seen letters of a young believer which have a “preaching style,” and all of us need grace to avoid anything in manner that dishonours the Lord. But unobtrusive, gracious work of conversation and correspondence is a blessing. It need hardly be said that younger sisters would rightly avoid taking Christian interest in males, and even aged sisters should be circumspect, albeit in helping those much younger, for, as a rule, we find brethren working among men, and sisters among women (note Tit. 2. 3, 4, and the godly caution even to Timothy in 1 Tim. 5. 2). It is not only that we should always be careful, but no occasion should be given to the enemy to misrepresent. Hence a sister may be a made blessing to one in the hospital, but will rejoice if a suitable brother takes up the case more fully. And thus will she further illustrate the PRINCIPLE of 1 Timothy 2, and receive the Lord's twofold approval to His glory. A graciously opened heart to Him is sensitive that He may be glorified, and there is a wish that nothing of selfish exaltation may gradually set aside the perfect arrangements of His precious Word and Will.

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<sup>3</sup> Strangely some who hate “bobbing,” &c., with Christian earnestness, themselves refuse a simple covering of the head in prayer unto God (1 Cor. 14. 13),—which is graciously commanded **WHEREVER** the prayer is. There is nothing about a meeting here. Prayer is “**UNTO GOD**” in the home, and in one's own bedroom alone, quite as much as in a meeting.

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# Scriptural meaning of clothing

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

The word “put on” means “to dress or clothe” oneself, and implies that Christ is to be *manifest* in the new life. In other words, an open and bold profession and confession of Christ is to mark the baptized believer.

It has been argued that the use of the word “put on” or “clothe” shews that immersion is not imperative. But apart from the plain meaning of “baptizo,” surely clothing is to envelope the *whole body*. The unadorned savage cannot be regarded as dressed or covered by his string of beads or strips of cloth. So, it is respectfully submitted, the sprinkling of a few drops of water on a person, young or old, cannot be regarded as baptism in the Scriptural sense.

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**“That is EVEN ALL ONE  
as if she were shaven.”**

1 Corinthians 11. 5.

**Y**ET many children of God who would rightly condemn with horror the cutting off of the hair, say that the omission to cover the head, at prayer, is “A small matter.” **THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS IT IS “EVEN ALL ONE.”**

And He says nothing here of meetings. Indeed, the reference to women praying or prophesying could not have been with regard to assembly gatherings (1 Cor. 14. 34). Hence the words must not be thus limited. Observe 1 Corinthians 11. 14, “Is it comely that a woman pray UNTO GOD uncovered”? Not a word about meetings. —“Praying UNTO GOD” is a wide term. Why should some believing women “except” praying at a meal table, or “exclude” praying to their Heavenly Father when they are alone, from this commandment? Have you His warrant, dear fellow-believer, for this? If not, **WHY CHANGE HIS WORDS?** Remember it is not a man but the Holy Spirit Who says that such an action is “EVEN ALL ONE” with the cutting off of hair that your heart condemns.

# “For a Covering.”

1 Corinthians 11. 15.

**M**ANY believing women are depriving themselves of an appointed privilege with regard to a covering in prayer, through a misinterpretation of the word used by the Holy Spirit in this verse. And as some are deeply concerned to please God, and desire not to oppose His will, and honestly think the verse suggests the absence of a covering, provided they retain long hair,\* it is only right to help by a prayerful study of the passage. It should ever be the joy of all to encourage “one another” in the possession of the privilege of worship and their accompaniments which God has lovingly brought before us.

1. It seems plain in this chapter that though brethren and sisters are one “in Christ,” there is a Divinely appointed and manifested distinction with respect to prayer. It is not for us to ask “Why?” but to be thankful (cf. the distinction as to clothing emphasised in Deut. 22. 5).

2. No one can make verse 4 command the entire absence of hair for a brother: it evidently prohibits a separate covering (as **distinct** from a part of the body), and it is to **this**, and not only as to the matter of personal hair, that the believing and obedient sister has definitely con-

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\* Necessarily rejecting the unholy custom of shortening this (contrast John 12. 3).

trusted instruction from their one Lord in the following verses.

3. Verses 5 and 6 bring before us different possibilities. IF “be not covered” means short hair (i.e., if the hair is the covering) “let her also be shorn” is superfluous: she is already shorn (the first meaning given to this word is to “cut the hair short”: it is distinguished by the Holy Spirit from “shaving”). “Let her be covered” is a definite action, not simply a condition beforehand.

4. The Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself: therefore verse 15 cannot deny verses 5 and 6, nor mean that the hair does duty for a covering.

5. The word (anti) rendered “for” has several derived meanings, but Liddell and Scott give as the first thought “over against.” When it means “instead of” the context explains what is implied as well. The Lexicon moreover refers to “grief upon (anti) grief,” and also adds, “to make comparison, one set against the other, compared with it.” Rightly, we ask how does the Holy Spirit use this word elsewhere in Scripture? Plainly to render it always “instead of” would be to bring confusion into some verses, e.g., Ephesians 5. 31, “For this cause,” i.e., “corresponding with this.” So in 2 Thessalonians 2. 10, “corresponding with the fact that they welcomed not the love of the truth.”† But it

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† The same idiom is found in Luke 1. 20.



may be said, “ In many cases you can translate ‘ instead.’ ” This is readily granted, but the underlying thought “ over against ” is not forgotten, and is often clearly contained, e.g., “ An eye for an eye ” (Matt. 5. 38), i.e., “ an eye corresponding with an eye,” the righteous judgment of **equivalent** retribution. So “ A ransom for many ” (Matt. 20. 28) unveils preciously that the Lord Jesus is seen to be the Saviour representing sinners. § We behold the transgressors in view of God’s holy law, and then we see Him, the Perfect One, and He, contrasted with them (“anti” means “ against ” in compounds, cf. Antichrist), bore their guilt, and they are free. They are a sad reality in one sphere and condition, and He is the Glorious Reality accepted before God: we realise the two positions over against one another. “ Grace for grace ” in John 1. 16 seems to denote “ wave upon wave,” over against. Romans 12. 17 forbids “evil for evil” (cf. 1 Thess. 5. 15, 1 Pet. 3. 9), i.e., “evil corresponding with evil,” retaliation. In Hebrews 12. 2 we see the Lord Jesus Who “over against the joy set before Him endured the cross ”—the two were linked, the cross and the crown. In Hebrews 12. 16 again we have two things set over against one another, “ one morsel of meat ” —“ his birthright ”; we know Esau’s

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§ It is not that Christ becomes the “ many,” which is the mistaken thought that most have in 1 Corinthians 11, namely that the hair becomes the covering!

sad choice. These passages will show that the “unattached,” loose meaning “instead” is not before us, even when that is a suitable rendering. The fulness and inwardness of inspired words must always be felt, and, as we have already hinted, compounds with this preposition (anti) illustrate the meaning (cf. 1 Peter 3. 21, “a type corresponding with a type” in English, antithesis, etc.).

The point in 1 Corinthians 11. 14, 15 seems clearly to be that nature also (or “even nature”) gives an illustration of what a Christian woman should **do** obediently in accord with God’s **grace**; not that “nature” provides different arrangements, for her to omit what the Holy Spirit has already guided her to do in earlier verses of the same chapter. Far otherwise, her “hair is given her corresponding with (over against) a covering.”\*\* The hair has been “given”; the covering she takes in love’s obedience, in prayer when alone as well as in home or homely prayer with others (“unto God” verse 13)—a holy witness against the independence of angels who sinned (verse 10 with ch. 6. 3), a privilege, not a burden, to the glory of God, and the blessing of all concerned.

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\*\* “Hair” is not a covering, to dispense with the appointed covering here, else a little hair on a brother’s head would mean that he had a little covering, and so cannot fulfil verse 4.

## **“ A LETTER TO BELIEVING MOTHERS.”**

The importance of fellowship in the home is clearly shewn with regard to Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob (Gen. 25. 28). The LACK of ONENESS led on to the craving of Genesis 27. 4, “ Savoury meat such as I love,” and the sad deceit of Genesis 27. 15, 16.

Though the Lord maintained His appointment, Jacob would surely have lost the blessing, but for mercy, after such a failure. These things are recorded to warn: may we take heed. There are now, more sad results in the homes of God’s dear people, through lack of unity in these last days, than any of us realize.

If God, in His wisdom, and for our instruction and warning, has recorded the sad failure of one home, He has been pleased, for the encouragement of His people to show another home, which is a beautiful contrast, with blessed results to His glory. I refer to Luke 1. 6. What delightful fellowship. “ THEY WERE BOTH RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD, WALKING IN ALL THE COMMANDMENTS AND ORDINANCES OF THE LORD, BLAMELESS.”

See also verses 13-17, 59-64, and 80. The last verse tells us where John the Baptist was trained. Children need more of the desert training. In Matthew 3. 4, we are told of the plainness of his food, and the simplicity of his clothing. What a contrast with the clothing of children in these evil days, or rather the absence of clothing. We hear of societies to prevent cruelty to animals, but how cruel, nay wicked, to send out little girls so immodestly bare at the present time. How Satan has blinded the eyes of mothers and others that this is not seen, is a marvel. Men and boys are being ruined, also the growing up girls, by these things, yet few lay it to heart, or protest ; while mothers who profess the Name of the Lord Jesus, seem AFRAID to be unlike the world, though the Lord Jesus said in John 17. 14, 16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." What humble delight there should be in shewing that we have been chosen OUT OF THE WORLD. It has been stated that these sinful fashions were introduced by the fallen women and harlots, certainly they are not from God.

That womanhood, girlhood and even childhood, are so degraded, should humble us to the dust. What weeping there ought to be, and what sighing there should be for all these abominations (Ezek. 9. 4).

But as in those days, few seemed to sigh and cry, so it is still. Oh for more heart-sorrow, and plainness of speech. How can believers walk with God and be immodestly dressed? How can mothers like to have their children so bare in the home? How the reverence and seriousness fitting in meetings are affected by these sinful fashions. It is a mystery that women can be so misled by Satan as to have such short skirts, and not a few wearing light stockings. Can it be thought modest for women to have shortened skirts because it is the fashion, and to have bare necks and chests, and arms? These things are indeed solemn.

How can women put on their little girls, frocks with hardly any skirt, and bare legs? Surely God is angry, and displeased at such terrible immodesty. There is a great need for humility and confession of sin. What a sad reaping there will be, and mothers are largely responsible. Let saved women take these things to heart, and gladly shew in themselves and in the home a holy contrast, in separation from the women of this sinful age, and God will work, and there will be results to His glory.

Furthermore, if mothers were thoughtful, could they cut their hair short, and that of their little girls, in the light of 1 Corinthians 11? If it is a shame for a man to have long hair, is it not Divinely said to be a

disgrace for a woman to have short hair like a man, when God has given her long hair ? How easy it is to follow the sinful fashions of a ruined world. Believing WIVES and MOTHERS and all believing women, young or old, ought in their clothing, even as in all else, to be patterns of godliness, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Tit. 2. 10). Should modest women be AFRAID to go contrary to the fashions which cannot please God ? What does it matter if we are called OLD-FASHIONED ?

May we count it a joy to shew whose we are, in a world hastening on to its doom. Will believing mothers, in the light of the Judgment Seat of Christ, and His wonderful love in saving us out from a ruined world, dare to harm their boys and girls for fear of scorn ? Let us think more of our heavenly calling, and we shall despise worldliness, and seek simply to please Him, our quickly coming Lord, and all by His grace and for His glory. Let us meditate on 1 Timothy 2. 9, 10, 1 Peter 3. 1-7, 1 Corinthians 11. The writer has been impressed with Isaiah 3. 16-24, 32. 9-11, also Revelation 1. 13, "Clothed with a garment down to the foot." May this loving and earnest appeal to believing mothers, and others, be heeded and taken to heart, in the sight of Him Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity (Hab. 1. 13).

## **Striking Inspired Testimony to some Believing Women.**

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**I**T is important to realize that, although the Scripture gives distinct spheres to brethren and sisters, it **never** minimises the value of women's ministry in a God-appointed path. It is a joy to collect some of the inspired commendations of those who sought and did the Lord's will, and when we do this we do well to remember how the fact that Christ was born of a woman is emphasized by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4. 4, Gen. 3. 15, Ps. 22. 9, 10, 69. 8, Isa. 49. 1). In the following list we do not include Hannah's song of trust and praise, or Mary's, for instance, (though we rejoice in their heavenly trust); it is our present object rather to show what **God says about women** who loved and served Him, and what He enabled His servants to say. In like manner we do not include general declarations as Proverbs 1. 8, 9, 14, 1, 31. 10-31 though they show us what God expects from holy women. And a New Testament parallel is found in 1 Timothy 5. 10. Nor would we forget the words, "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price; for after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves" (1 Pet. 3. 4, 5). And now we reach **individuals** of like feelings with ourselves, enabled to glorify God, and to receive His approval.

"Sarah . . . . judged Him faithful Who had promised" (Heb. 11. 11).

"Hail (rejoice) thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1. 28).

"Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performing of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1. 45).

"One Anna, a prophetess, . . . she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2. 36, 37).

“ She loved much ” (Luke 7. 47).

“ Certain women . . . which ministered unto Him of their substance ” (Luke 8. 2, 3).

“ O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt ” (Matthew 15. 28).

“ Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her ” (Luke 10. 42).

“ She has wrought a good work upon Me . . . . Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her ” (Matthew 26. 10, 13).

“ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus ” (Acts 1. 14).

“ Dorcas, this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did ” (Acts 9. 36).

“ Phebe . . . she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also ” (Romans 16. 1, 2).

“ Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Jesus Christ, who have for my sake laid down their necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also the churches of the Gentiles ” (Romans 16. 3, 4).

“ Mary which bestowed much labour on us ” (Romans 16. 6).

“ Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. The beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord ” (Romans 16. 12).

PERCY W. HEWARD